

LifeWay Family Bible Series for June 13: Lord's Supper symbolizes God's new covenant_53104

May 28, 2004

Posted: 5/28/04

LifeWay Family Bible Series for June 13

Lord's Supper symbolizes God's new covenant

Matthew 26:26-29; 1 Corinthians 11:23-32

By Rodney McGlothlin

First Baptist Church, College Station

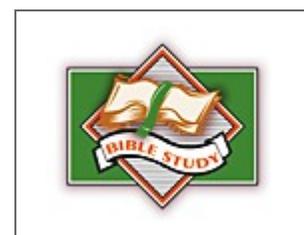
Children are fascinated by the ordinances of the church. They often want to participate before they are ready to receive the spiritual realities for which they stand.

A little boy once told me he wanted to get "babatized" so he would be able to "eat dinner with God." He had figured out that he could not have the Lord's Supper until after he had been baptized. His motivation for baptism may have been suspect, but his theology of Lord's Supper exceeded that of many believers I have known.

"For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus,

on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.' For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (1 Corinthians 11:23-26).

We should remember that the Lord's Supper was a shared meal between Jesus and his disciples. In that sense, my little friend got it right. They had a meal with God.



Jesus took the elements of Passover, the symbols of the old covenant between Israel and God, and transformed them into the symbols of the new covenant. His body and blood would be the means of bringing about this new relationship between God and man. In the Supper, all the participants in grace are present.

Lord's Supper is an act of remembrance

The Jews had a wonderful tradition of remembering their greatest stories through feasts and festivals. These were teaching times. For the most part, these festivities took place in homes rather than public meeting places. They rehearsed the stories of Israel's past and shared them again with another generation.

Jesus said, "Do this in remembrance of me." The Lord's Supper is a way of remembering what Jesus did to provide our salvation. The church always

must nurture its collective memory of redemption. It is a story we should remember together. "I love to tell the story; 'twill be my theme in glory; to tell the old, old story; of Jesus and his love."

Lord's Supper is an act of proclamation

"For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death."

Two questions frequently arise concerning our practice of this proclamation. To whom is this proclamation made? How often should we observe the ordinance?

The proclamation is made to all who are present. That is not the same thing as saying the Supper is served to all, regardless of their relationship with the Lord.

I love it when lost people are present for baptism. They never get in the water with me and the candidate, and do not feel excluded by this. The church is not a secret society where its most important acts of initiation and inclusion are secret. They are done in public to proclaim the truths of the gospel to believers and unbelievers alike.

We should make sure to remember the gospel story when observing the Supper. We can do this through reading Scripture, sharing testimonies, singing appropriate music and explaining the meaning of the Supper itself. We should never waste an opportunity to proclaim the gospel.

How often should this proclamation be made? I fear we have been reactionary at this point. Since those who view the Supper as the means to receiving grace often take it weekly, we have gone to the extreme of practicing it sporadically or seasonally. I am more convinced than ever that it is not observing the Supper too often that has led to sacramentalism but

celebrating it too thoughtlessly. The Lord's Supper is gospel proclamation at its best.

Lord's Supper is an act of anticipation

“For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death, until he comes.”

The Lord's Supper does not just look back to the events around the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. It looks forward in anticipation to the time when Jesus will come again. When he first instituted the Supper, Jesus told his disciples, “I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father's kingdom” (Matthew 26:29). There is coming a day when we will be gathered to our eternal home in heaven. Jesus is coming again. The Lord's Supper anticipates his return and our eternal place in his kingdom.

The Lord's Supper is an expression of our blessed hope. One of my favorite holidays as a child was Thanksgiving. It was not a gifting holiday like Christmas or birthdays. It was not a noisy holiday like July 4th or Halloween. It was a family day. It included cousins, aunts, uncles and grandparents.

I remember every story told by my uncles and my father, who served in World War II. I remember stories my grandparents told about my parents. It was good to know they were kids too. I heard about family plans, dreams and hopes. Most of all, I was included. It was the story I found myself in.

The Lord's Supper has become for me the story of grace. Grace is the story I have found myself in. I want to remember it, proclaim it and anticipate its fulfillment.

Questions for discussion

◆ How can you make the Lord's Supper more meaningful?

News of religion, faith, missions, Bible study and Christian ministry among Texas Baptist churches, in the BGCT, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and around the world.